



Murder by Phone

Murder by Phone (also released as ***Bells*** and ***The Calling***^{[2][3]}) is a 1982 science-fiction slasher film directed by Michael Anderson and starring Richard Chamberlain, John Houseman, Sara Botsford, Robin Gammell, Gary Reineke and Barry Morse. Its plot follows a series of murders committed by a disgruntled phone company employee who designs a device that kills victims when they answer their telephones.

Murder by Phone



US theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Michael Anderson</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Michael Butler</u> <u>Dennis Shryack</u> <u>John Kent Harrison</u>
Story by	<u>George Armondo</u> <u>James Whiton</u> <u>Michael Butler</u> <u>Dennis Shryack</u>
Produced by	<u>Bob Cooper</u>
Starring	<u>Richard Chamberlain</u> <u>John Houseman</u> <u>Sara Botsford</u> <u>Robin Gammell</u> <u>Gary Reineke</u> <u>Barry Morse</u>
Cinematography	<u>Reginald H. Morris</u>
Music by	<u>John Barry</u>

Cast

Production company	Coco Films <u>Famous Players</u> <u>CFDC</u>
Distributed by	<u>Astral Films</u> (Canada) <u>New World Pictures</u> (US) ^[1]
Release dates	May 27, 1982 (Colombia) October 8, 1982 (US & Canada)
Running time	95 minutes
Countries	Canada United States
Language	English

- Richard Chamberlain as Nat Bridger
- John Houseman as Stanley Markowitz
- Sara Botsford as Ridley Taylor
- Robin Gammell as Noah Clayton
- Gary Reineke as Lt. Meara
- Barry Morse as Fred Waites
- Alan Scarfe as John Websole
- James B. Douglas as Jack Gilsdorf
- Ken Pogue as Fil Thorner
- Neil Munro as Winters
- Tom Butler as Detective Tamblyn
- Colin Fox as Dr. Leon Alderman
- Jefferson Mappin as Alex
- Luba Goy as Beth Freemantle
- Lenore Zann as Connie Lawson
- George R. Robertson as George Lord
- Jo-Anne Hannah as Sandra Thorner
- Duncan McIntosh as Dave Misner
- Martha Gibson as Mrs. Andersen
- Angus MacInnes as Lab Guard
- Elva Mai Hoover as Phone Woman
- Neil Affleck as Phone Tracer

Novel

The movie was preceded by a novel called *Phone Call* written by the screenwriters Michael Butler and Dennis Shryack by author Jon Messman. It was published in 1979, three years before the film version. It is never credited in the film's credits. The link was mentioned on the cover in later editions of the book.^[4]

Production

The film was filmed in 1980 in Toronto, Ontario.^[5] The working title of the film was *Bells*, which appeared on early promotional material, but it was changed to *Murder by Phone* before it was released.^{[2][3]}

Music

The score by John Barry is electronic, played entirely with synthesisers. This was a rarity for Barry. Whilst he composed and conducted the score, it was performed by Jonathan Elias and John Petersen. Elias later went on to work with Barry on the scores for *Jagged Edge* and *A View to a Kill*.

Release

Murder by Phone was first released in Colombia on May 27, 1982. It released in Canada and the United States on October 8, 1982.^[a]

Critical response

Leonard Maltin noted the film's cast and direction as being legitimately "talented," but deemed the film a "hoary horror exercise."^[7]

Home media

Murder by Phone was released on VHS by Warner Home Video in 1984.^[8] The VHS was reissued in 1998.^[9]

Notes

- a. The earliest newspaper sources displaying showtimes for the film are dated for the weekend of October 8—10, 1982.^[6]

References

1. Muir 2011, pp. 116–117.
2. Hunter, Rob (June 26, 2017). "That Ringing In Your Ears? It's 'Murder By Phone' Calling" (<https://filmschoolrejects.com/murder-by-phone-review/>). *Film School Rejects*. Retrieved September 6, 2018.
3. "Corman turns hand to Canadian films". *The Toronto Star*. 21 September 1982. p. 27.
4. "Phone Call" (<http://www.gradyhendrix.com/phone-call>). *Grady Hendrix*. Retrieved 2021-06-01.
5. Fischer 2011, p. 50.

6. "Midnite Movie Express" (https://www.newspapers.com/clip/23503056/the_tampa_tribune/). *The Tampa Tribune*. Tampa, Florida. October 8, 1982. p. 23 – via Newspapers.com. .
7. *Maltin 2009*, p. 946.
8. *Murder by Phone* (VHS). Warner Home Video. 1984 [1982]. 24005.
9. *Murder by Phone* (VHS). Warner Home Video. 1998 [1982]. ASIN [6300271919](https://www.amazon.com/dp/6300271919) (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/6300271919>).

Works cited

- Fischer, Dennis (2011). *Science Fiction Film Directors, 1895–1998*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland. ISBN [978-0-786-48505-5](#).
- Maltin, Leonard (2009). *Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide*. New American Library. ISBN [978-0-451-22468-2](#).
- Muir, John Kenneth (2011). *Horror Films of the 1980s* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=VJ1vcmaOd7wC&pg=PA116>). Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland. ISBN [978-0-7864-5501-0](#).

External links

- *Murder by Phone* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0081203/>) at IMDb
- *Murder by Phone* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/murder_by_phone) at Rotten Tomatoes

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